

"Obstacles to Godliness, Part 2" - 2 Corinthians 7:1-7 – October 30th, 2016

- Today's teaching is part two of a teaching I've titled, "Obstacles to Godliness."
- Chapter seven is really a continuation of chapter six in the sense that the Apostle Paul is continuing his same train of thought.
- However, there's a noticeable change of tone in this chapter such that he speaks directly to the matter of the heart and the will.

- It's for this reason the common denominator in everything Paul writes them is that of their unwillingness concerning godliness.
- While it is true that the indwelling of and empowering from the Holy Spirit enables us to live a holy life, we still play a role in it.
- As such, we're about to see very specifically that which can become a hindrance on our part to living pure, holy and godly lives.

1. An unwillingness to live spiritually pure lives (Verse 1)

1 Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

- v1 Paul says since we have the promises he just mentioned, let us purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit.
- He then continues on in verse one saying to them, that we must be willing to perfect holiness out of our reverence for God.
- What Paul says here is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is because of the way he says what he says.

- Notice first how that Paul doesn't say to them that you need to purify yourselves, but he instead says, let us purify ourselves.
- Notice secondly that he refers to this purifying, or as some of translations render it, cleansing, of both our bodies and our spirit.
- The reason I point this out is that Paul is talking about the spiritual impurities that we allow to take up residence in our lives.

Charles Spurgeon of this said, "I wish we were more concerned about cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the spirit. I am inclined to think that some men heedlessly pollute their spirits; I mean that they do it willfully."

- The question becomes that of what do we, as Spurgeon says, "Willingly pollute our spirits with," to make us spiritually impure?
- I would suggest it's none other than spiritual pride, which is at the core of self-righteousness, bitterness, contempt and legalism.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that these impurities are in many ways more difficult to deal with than the sins of the flesh.

G. Campbell Morgan had this to say, "There is a defilement of the spirit which is independent of the defilement of the flesh. The spirit can be defiled in many ways. I sometimes think that the sins of the spirit are more deadly than the sins of the flesh."

2. An unwillingness to be honest and open (Verses 2-4)

2 Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. 3 I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. 4 I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.

- v2 Paul tells them to make room in their hearts by virtue of how they've wronged no one, corrupted no one nor exploited no one.
- v3 He says this not to condemn them, rather, because they have such a place in his heart that he would live and die with them.
- v4 He says while he has spoke bluntly with them, he takes great pride in them, and is encouraged by them in spite of his trials.

- What Paul is saying here is that instead of the Corinthians being open and honest with Paul, they were unfairly critical of Paul.
- So much so, that they had believed the false accusations about Paul, and even themselves had been falsely accusing Paul.
- This is why he tells them that he has been honest and open with them, such that he has never defrauded or wronged anyone.

- One of the things I'm learning in my own walk with the Lord, particularly in the ministry, is false accusations destroy Christians.
- False accusations not only destroy Christians, they will also destroy churches, and when they do, the devil couldn't be happier.
- This because, the devil as the accuser of the brethren, often times uses Christians in this way, to do his accusatory bidding.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NKJV) —24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

3. An unwillingness to be teachable (Verses 5-7)

5 For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

- v5 Paul says when they came to Macedonia they had no rest, they were harassed with conflicts on the outside and fears within.
- v6 He then goes on to say my favorite two words in the Bible, "but God." But God comforts the downcast, which he did by Titus.
- v7 He says it wasn't only the comfort from Titus, it was their comfort to Titus who told of their deep sorrow and ardent concern.

- Here, Paul is expressing how his joy was greater than ever because the Corinthian's were teachable and received his rebuke.
- As a Pastor, it is of paramount importance that I am teachable, and moreover, that those under my teaching are also teachable.
- While being un-teachable is one of the greatest hindrances to godly living, being teachable is one of the greatest joys as well.

Morgan - "No circumstances of personal affliction can dim the gladness of seeing souls grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus."